

Sinusitis

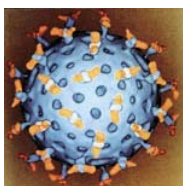
What is sinusitis?

Sinusitis is inflamed or infected linings of the sinuses. The sinuses are hollow spaces in the bones of your face. They connect with the nose through small openings. Like the nose, they are lined with membranes that make mucus.



How does it occur?

The passageways between sinuses and from the sinuses to the nose are very narrow. Swelling of the sinus linings cause them to produce too much mucus. The mucus fills up the sinuses and may block the passageways. This leads to pressure changes in the sinuses that can be painful. The trapped mucus may become infected.



A number of different irritants can cause swelling and sinusitis. Sinusitis often occurs after a cold, but not always. Bacteria, viruses, allergies, and even fungus can cause sinusitis.

If your nasal bones have been injured or are deformed, causing partial blockage of the sinus openings, you are more likely to get sinusitis.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms include:

- feeling of fullness and congestion in your head
- a headache that is most painful when you first wake up in the morning and when you bend your head down or forward
- tenderness above, behind, or below the eyes
- sore cheeks, or what feels like a toothache or sore jaw
- runny or stuffy nose
- cough, especially at night



a feeling of fluid draining in the back of your throat (postnasal drainage)
morning or evening sore throat.

How is it diagnosed?

Your health care provider will ask about your symptoms and will examine you. You may have an x-ray to look for swelling, fluid, or small benign growths (polyps) in the sinuses.



How is it treated?



Decongestants may help. They may be nonprescription or prescription. They are available as liquids, pills, and nose sprays.

Your health care provider may prescribe an antibiotic. In some cases you may need to take decongestants and antibiotics for several weeks.

If you have chronic (recurrent) sinus infections, allergies may be the cause. Your health care provider may prescribe antihistamines or prescription nasal sprays (steroids or cromolyn) to treat the allergies.

If you have chronic, severe sinusitis that does not respond to treatment with medicines, surgery may be done. The surgeon can create an extra or enlarged passageway in the wall of the sinus cavity. This allows the sinuses to drain more easily through the nasal passages. This should help them stay free of infection.

How long will the effects last?

Symptoms may improve gradually over 3 to 10 days. Depending on what caused the sinusitis and how severe it is, it may last for days, weeks, or months.

Recovering from sinusitis is much like recovering from a cold.

How can I take care of myself?

Avoid smoke, other inhaled irritants, and allergens, such as animal dander.

Add moisture to the air with a humidifier or a vaporizer, unless you have mold allergy (mold may grow in your vaporizer).

Inhale steam from a basin of hot water or shower to relieve pain.





Use decongestants as directed. Never use nasal spray decongestants for more than 3 days. After 3 days they may cause your symptoms to get worse.

Get plenty of rest and drink a lot of water.

Elevate your head in bed, but only slightly.

Put warm compresses on painful areas.

Take antibiotics as prescribed. Use all of the medicine, even if you feel better.

See your health care provider if the pain lasts for several days or you have signs of bacterial infection, such as fever or foul-smelling discharge from your nose.

If the sinuses above or below your eyes are swollen or bulging, see your health care provider right away.



How can I help prevent sinusitis?



Treat your colds and allergies promptly. Use decongestants as soon as you start having symptoms.

Do not smoke.

Drink lots of fluids.

Humidify your home if the air is particularly dry.

If you have sinus infections often, consider having allergy tests.

If sinusitis continues to be a problem despite treatment, you might need an exam by an ear, nose, and throat doctor (otolaryngologist). The specialist will check for polyps or deformed bone that may be blocking your sinuses.



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